

Mr. Speaker, tell me where the line forms to ask hard questions.

□ 1545

#### RIISING TO THE OCCASION AS AMERICANS TO HELP AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, yes, New Orleans is worth saving and rebuilding. It is one of the most American cities, for it represents how diversity comes together in harmony and blends into our music, our foods, our culture, and our Americanism.

Response to this disaster was a miserable failure. Americans died, Americans went hungry, Americans were living for days without water and without health services. You can live without food for 7 days, but you cannot live without water. Our health services were dysfunctional. We must admit, we failed at protecting our American citizens in our own homeland.

We as Congress must rise to the occasion. We have American citizens suffering and cannot get immediate help to them. Medics always take our wounded off the battlefields. Our social contract says trust us and we will deliver in your time of need. This is America's Gulf War.

One-half million people have been uprooted. Millions of people in Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana, have been affected. 150,000 of the displaced live below the poverty line, and 50,000 of them are post-retirement age.

So what are we doing about it? What am I doing about it? I have called my State government, I have called my board of education, I have called my local representatives to ask them to do a displacement absorption plan; invite them to California, invite them to Los Angeles. Share your housing with a family. Share your schools, your colleges and your universities with those post-secondary students. Both public and private colleges must kick in.

We have started the New Orleans Hurricane Relief Fund. I am collecting money, along with several other organizations in the L.A. area and with one of our major radio stations, and we are having that money hand-carried into these disaster areas to the leadership that has been chosen to be responsible.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things that we can do and we must do, and we must do them now. I do not want to watch television another evening and see people begging for food and water, begging for medicine, begging to be taken out of areas that are soaked with water that will be causing diseases, with an environment that is polluted from the smoke coming up from the buildings that are on fire.

Where are we when the world is watching? I am embarrassed for the U.N. to say we are going to help you,

but I am overjoyed that other nations are addressing our needs when we are in need, as we have addressed theirs when they are in need.

So let us rise to the occasion. Let us save Americans. They are not refugees; they are citizens of the United States.

#### IN SUPPORT OF EMERGENCY APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this emergency appropriation.

This is a moment of crisis for America. This is a test of our character as a great nation.

As we gather here in relative comfort, Americans are dying in Louisiana. At this moment, Americans are facing danger and desperation in Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi.

We all have seen the horrific pictures. We have heard the desperate screams for help. We all have heard the accounts of the almost unimaginable devastation that has gripped America's Gulf Coast.

Now is the time for Americans to immediately respond. Now is the time for us, as a people, to take action with a force equal to that of Hurricane Katrina.

We face an enormous challenge; yet, this is not the time to become overwhelmed. It is, however, a time that cries out for a heightened sense of urgency.

Now is the time for immediate and effective action, as a nation and individually.

The Federal Government is responding—and we are moving to pick up the pace.

Today, the Congress will approve a \$10 billion emergency aid package to help fund relief efforts.

The members of the Congressional Black Caucus have pledged to do all that we can to help. Several of our members will be visiting the Gulf Coast in the next few weeks to provide support. However, we cannot stop here.

The Bush administration and the Congress must demonstrate that we share the sense of urgency felt by those on the front lines of this battle for survival on the Gulf Coast. We must dedicate the full resources of the Federal Government to stabilize, repair, and rebuild this important region of our country.

There is no time to waste, for people are dying. The destruction caused by the aftermath of this storm gets worse every hour.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans felt lucky just to be alive after surviving the storm. Now, they are in a continuing struggle for their survival. Men, women and children (our countrymen) have now gone days without food—and far too long without the clean water and medical attention that they need. They are surrounded by flood waters littered with dead bodies.

It is the frail, sick, weak, and elderly that are dying, all while the Nation is about to celebrate a long holiday weekend.

Many of those now in such dire circumstances were already living in poverty and destitution even before Hurricane Katrina. They had no ability to evacuate. And, now, their very survival depends upon the response of their country.

Many of these Americans who now are struggling to survive are Americans of color.

Their cries for assistance confront America with a test of our moral compass as a Nation. We cannot allow it to be said by history that the difference between those who lived and those who died in the great storm and flood of 2005 was nothing more than poverty, age or skin color. It would be unconscionable to stand by and do nothing.

I had a constructive conversation yesterday with Mr. Claude Allen, the President's top assistant for domestic policy. I am confident that the Federal Government is expanding and intensifying its response as I speak.

Yet, government cannot succeed in this challenge without help. We must challenge leaders in the private sector to formulate strategies as to how they can best contribute.

We have long heard claims of "compassionate conservatism" among our Nation's leaders. This is the time for those with wealth and resources to step up to the plate and demonstrate that compassion.

This is the time to save human lives. People are dying because they have no water. Companies that bottle water now have the power to save lives. Infants are dying because there is no baby formula to keep them alive. Companies that make this formula must be on the front lines. Food companies could work with the National Guard to coordinate the distribution of food to the victims. Private contractors that have helicopters and boats and buses at their disposal could put those tools to work in the service of their country.

It has been reported that oil producers and home improvement stores may actually benefit in the long run from Hurricane Katrina. These are industries that should be the first to offer support.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am not saying that nothing is being done at this time, although we all expected the Federal response would have been more immediate.

Nevertheless, generosity of spirit is being demonstrated by countless individuals in this country who have given an outpouring of support.

Now, however, is the time for those who can make a major impact with just one phone call to do so. And if these private companies already have something planned, it is important that they coordinate their efforts to provide their help most effectively.

This crisis demands a heightened—and sustained—sense of urgency.

The public has asked what they can do. They can begin by donating to the various charities that have pledged to help in the relief effort. They can also follow our lead today by demanding that the mayors and governors across this great Nation provide essential services to those now seeking shelter and aid.

In Matthew 25, verses 34 through 40, the Lord gives a simple explanation of what is demanded of true Christians:

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed